

SAN JOAQUIN RIVER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM ADVISORY COUNCIL

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

September 10, 2003
Stanislaus County Agricultural Center
Modesto, California

Welcome and Introductions

The San Joaquin River Management Program Advisory Council met at the Stanislaus County Agricultural Center in Modesto, California. There were no comments on the draft minutes of the June 25, 2003 meeting. Draft minutes from the most recent meeting and pertinent documents are posted on the SJRMP website at:

<http://www.dpla.water.ca.gov/sjd/sjrm/index.html>

Letter of Support Review Process

Paula Landis, DWR, discussed the letters of consistency process. It can be found online at:

<http://www.dpla.water.ca.gov/sjd/sjrm/documents/approvalprocess.html>. Groups that were supplied letters of consistency for concept proposals are going to use the same letters for their full proposals.

Current Requests for Letters of Support

Before the San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust presentation, Landis reminded the group that SJRMP was part of the outreach and gave input for the survey in part 1 of the SJRPCT CALFED project.

San Joaquin River Parkway and Conservation Trust

Angela Moskow, Bay Institute, presented information about the ecological scorecard aspect of the "This River is Our River, Phase 2" concept proposal for CALFED. The scorecard will be a scientifically based assessment tool, useful for scientists, environmental managers, and policy makers and an outreach tool to educate and engage public statewide, regionally, and locally.

Questions and Comments for Proposal

1. How are you going to develop the basis of the score?
Moskow explained that the indicator results are going to be established based on an "upper reference condition" like a historical condition, or the relationship with a biological response (restoration plan or recovery goal).

2. Who determines the grade?
The panel of experts included: Jim Karr, University of Washington; Peter Moyle, University of California, Davis; Fred Nichols, US Geological Survey (ret.); Matt Kondolf, University of California, Berkeley; Phil Williams, Phil Williams Associates; and Bruce Herbold, US Environmental Protection Agency.
3. A request was made to see the scorecard indices clearly described in the full proposal.
4. Several comments focused on the concern that there is only a small panel of experts and no one from the San Joaquin Valley was included in the decision making process. Several SJRMP attendees pointed out that there should be opportunities for public review or workshops to solicit stakeholder involvement and input on the indices. Some stakeholders to consider include individuals that have a close connection to the River, and groups like the San Joaquin River Task Force, SJR Resource Management Coalition, and Friant/NRDC. Moskow commented that after the first scorecard there will be revisions.

The full proposal will be submitted to SJRMP staff in late September or early October. The proposal will be reviewed and if it is consistent with SJRMP goals and objectives a letter of consistency will be posted online for review. If any individuals feel that it is inadequate, a disclaimer can be added.

National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration Fisheries

Madelyn Martinez, NOAA, presented some background on NOAA Fisheries responsibilities. The responsibility of NOAA Fisheries is to administer and monitor compliance with the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) for marine and anadromous fish species; to conduct an analysis of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for Pacific Salmon, pursuant to the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA); and many more laws including the Anadromous Fish Conservation Act; Marine Mammal Protection Act; Marine Protection, Research, and Sanctuaries Act; NOAA's Marine Fisheries Program Authorization Act; etc. Listed anadromous fish species that NOAA Fisheries protect in California include the Steelhead and Chinook salmon.

NOAA Fisheries is required to assist the Regional Management Fishery Councils to delineate "Essential Fish Habitat" for all managed species in the fishery management plans. Federal action agencies which permit, or carry activities that may adversely impact EFH are required to consult with NOAA Fisheries regarding potential effects of their actions on EFH, and respond in writing the fisheries service's recommendations. In addition, NOAA Fisheries is required to comment on any state agency activities that would impact EFH.

It is important to contact NOAA Fisheries when a stakeholder group or agency receives funding for a project that could potentially impact any of the listed species in the project area. Martinez also included a consultation process flow chart and a

process to obtain research permits for federally endangered and threatened anadromous salmonids in California in her presentation.

Contact information:

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San Joaquin River Salmon Spawning Escapements

Tim Heyne, California Department of Fish and Game, informed SJRMP of the current San Joaquin River salmon spawning escapements. The DFG Tuolumne River Salmon Restoration Center's monitoring area includes the Stanislaus River, Tuolumne River, and the Merced River. The principle purpose of the monitoring is to estimate the number of spawning Chinook salmon and to collect additional information to better document fish populations.

The monitoring involves marking the carcasses of fish that have recently spawned. This requires pulling the carcasses from the River; examining, measuring, and tagging the fish; and returning the fish to flowing water in the River. When a carcass is spotted they catch it, mark it, and recover it later. They also count the live fish and the redds in the River. With this information they estimate the ratio of marked fish to unmarked fish.

Additional information collected includes missing adipose fin data, collecting scales and otoliths (ear bones), fin samples, and information on rainbow trout. The missing adipose fin tells the collectors that the fish could have been released from a hatchery. The head is taken from those fish to locate the tag to get the information about the fish; e.g. where it was released, when, and the age of the fish. The scales are used to determine the age of the fish. The otoliths are also used to determine the age of the fish, but it is a more complicated process to remove and analyze so the scales are preferred. Fin samples are taken to determine the genetics of the fish. There is some information from the fin samples that indicate the fall run anadromous populations are scrambled, the fish aren't returning to the same river that they originated. Fish can become confused at the confluence of rivers and may stray as far away as the Sacramento River system. DFG has not yet determined why there are no consistent patterns. Some things that they have learned from the tagged fish are that the fish smell their way back up the River to the spawning grounds.

Heyne pointed out that the age determination is very important because the young fish are not as fertile as the older fish. When there are runs with a high percentage of young fish spawning it is a concern.

Overview/Update of USGS Water Quality Monitoring

Charlie Kratzer, USGS presented the USGS water quality monitoring and studies in the San Joaquin Valley. Kratzer discussed some of the ongoing water quality programs in the San Joaquin Valley and the recent USGS publications in the SJV. Some items discussed in detail include the San Joaquin-Tulare Basins study unit of National Water-Quality Assessment program http://ca.water.usgs.gov/sanj_nawqa; a federally funded program.

The long term goals of the NAWQA are to assess the status and trends of the quality of freshwater streams and aquifers, and to provide a sound understanding of the natural and human factors that affect the quality of these resources. The activities for this fiscal year include:

- status and trends of surface and ground water quality
- Topical Teams that analyze:
 - agricultural chemicals sources, transport, and fate (ACT)
 - transport of anthropogenic and natural contaminants to community supply wells (TANC)
- various reports

ACT is being studied in major basins across the U.S.; the current study area in California is the San Joaquin Valley. ACT surface water objectives are to characterize event-based transport, flux and in-stream transformations of agricultural chemicals; compare the scales of the small stream, Mustang Creek, with the indicator site on the Merced River; and calibrate the models. The agricultural chemicals that are being tested are pesticides and metabolites (SCH2003, LCAA), nutrients and organic carbon, major ions, and suspended sediment. The USGS would like to understand the process of how water flows through a watershed, understand how land use impacts water quality, extrapolate findings to ungaged watersheds and to different scales, and forecast changes in hydrology and water quality under a variety of 'what if' scenarios. The ground water modeling will characterize ground water flow in the basin and will guide data collection/network design, provide framework for extrapolation of detailed GW work to entire basin, and to create more refined models that may be used in areas of flow path studies.

TANC will address the primary contaminant sources, aquifer processes, and well characteristics that control the transport and transformation of contaminants from recharge areas to supply wells in representative drinking water aquifers. The specific objectives are to assess human activities, hydrologic, and geologic factors that are related to sources, determine hydrologic factors that affect transport, identify important chemical characteristics and transformation processes, evaluate effects of well characteristics and well-field management, and extrapolate the results. In the San Joaquin Valley the site selected for the TANC study is in Modesto.

Currently, the USGS has a proposal in for CALFED funding that will look at three approaches to define spatial and temporal variability and to quantify nitrate sources and loads. The first is continuous measurement of temperature, EC, and optical

properties of water just above the streambed. Areas with significant changes will have samples collected for C, N, and O isotopes and other tracers.

The second is to re-visit sites on the SJR (Newman, Crows Landing, and Patterson) with nested piezometers and install three more between Patterson and Vernalis. Continuous temperature and water levels, and monthly nutrients will be measured over a two year period. Ground water inflow rates will be based by two numerical methods: simulation of vertical flow and heat flux beneath the streambed at six sites; and simulation of 2-D ground water flow at the three existing transects.

The third approach is to use the San Joaquin Valley reconnaissance method (used on Merced River) at 30 sites between the six permanent piezometer transects twice per year (in Spring and Fall, coordinated with the boat recons). At each site the USGS will measure gradients, temperature differences between river and below streambed; and nitrates in the river and below the streambed. SJRMP volunteered to provide the USGS a letter of consistency for their proposed CALFED project.

Other Business

The Next Advisory Council Meeting: is scheduled on Wednesday, January 21 at 9:00 am at the Stanislaus County Agricultural Center.

**ATTENDEES AT
SAN JOAQUIN RIVER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING
September 10, 2003**

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